



03 LIBRARY SITE CONTEXT

Location

The site for the library is located at east side of 160 North Main Street just south of the intersection of Weller Lane, which will provide the primary vehicular access to the site. The eastern boundary of the site is the Southern Pacific Railroad right-of-way. The historic blacksmith shop is located on a privately-owned parcel, just south of the site. The lot on the other side of Weller Lane is currently under development for residential and commercial mixed use. The property across the street on the west side of Main Street is City-owned property that contains the Smith/DeVries House. The library site falls within the Midtown Project Area, which is a planned multi-year effort to invigorate the oldest part of the City, and create a pedestrian-oriented downtown. The library will be an important element in the implementation of this initiative.

The 20-year Midtown Specific Plan is intended to transform the Midtown area - approximately 1,100 acres of land running along Main and Abel streets - to, in the words of the plan, "an attractive and economically vital district that accommodates a mixture of housing, shopping, employment, cultural and recreational activities organized within a system of landscaped boulevards, streets and pedestrian/bicycle linkages." The plan will facilitate the development of up to 4,860 housing units - with housing density as high as 60 units per acre - 61,000 square feet of retail space, 300,000 square feet of general commercial space, 720,000 square feet of office space and 48 acres of parks and trails.

When the library study began, the site for the expansion was at the Civic Center, the current location of the Milpitas Public Library. Initial studies demonstrated that the required expansion and parking were not feasible at the Civic Center. City staff recognized that the existing library building at the Civic Center could provide an excellent match with the needs of a new senior center and that the historic Grammar School site was large enough to accommodate the new library. The City Council, therefore, re-designated the historic Grammar School site (160 North Main Street) as the library site, and the expansion/renovation of the existing library building as the future senior center. The decision to move the library and adaptively reuse the historic Grammar School, will also allow the library to remain in its present location until the new building is ready. This decision will save the expense and trouble of establishing a temporary library and having to move the collection two times.

The Value of the Library to the Midtown Plan

When trying to revive struggling downtowns, many cities have found that libraries reinforce mixed-use development. They serve people of all ages at many different times of day. When people come to the

library they also do errands downtown or dine in a restaurant. Many families meet at the library after work and school. Libraries work well with many uses, especially with movie theaters, bookstores and copy centers or small business centers.

Since the new library building will be one of the early City projects to be completed within the framework of the Midtown Specific Plan, the building and its site will tend to set the standard for future private development. Chapter 8 of the Midtown Specific Plan sets out development standards and guidelines that affect the library site. All projects within the midtown area are subject to site and architectural review. The City will apply the use permit process rather than the variance process in this area to allow maximum flexibility in meeting the intent of the plan.

Historic Resources

Preservation of historic resources is recommended in the Midtown Plan; several existing buildings are located on or adjacent to the site.

The Milpitas Grammar School, which will be the heart of the proposed library was completed in 1916. It is an example of a neo-classical public building with an interesting, somewhat delicate scale--as though sized in proportion to its original occupants. The structure is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Page and Turnbull, Historic Architects, are preparing an historic structures report for the existing historic building in concert with this study. The discussion of the preferred scheme in this study responds to the early findings of the Page and Turnbull report.

The DeVries/Smith Home (163 North Main Street), which is directly across Main Street from the library site was completed in 1915, and is a rare example of Prairie-Style design in this area.

The Winsor Blacksmith Shop (112 North Main Street) is adjacent to the south property line of the site. It was completed in the 1920's and is a locally rare surviving example of the early false front commercial building.

Utilities and Public Services

Chapter 6 of the Midtown Plan addresses utilities and public services, as well as describing county and regional agencies with which the City cooperates. The City is in the process of implementing the recommendations of the plan, such as undergrounding power and telecommunications utilities and installing an upgraded storm drainage system. Several of these projects impact the Library site because of its location in the Midtown Plan area.

Although the projects are separate from the library project the library project team needs to be mindful of coordination and phasing of various projects with the library. The City may have adopted new policies based on Midtown Plan recommendations for Water Supply and Distribution, Sanitary Sewer, Storm Drainage, Solid Waste, and Electrical, Gas and Telephone services, which the Library project team needs to

keep in mind. A major aspect of the City's infrastructure, which will affect the Library, is the master telecommunications plan and the master street tree planting plan.

The telecommunications plan anticipates a fiber optic network connecting all major City facilities. The City's network will support voice, data, and video services as well as connectivity for an internal telephone system, which is not dependent on the local telephone provider.

The master street tree-planning plan is intended to be implemented in advance of private development as a City capital improvement plan. The plan is highly specific with regard to species and spacing. The design for the plaza around the library and the street tree program need to be coordinated.

Circulation

The Midtown Plan recommends that a priority be placed on improving the viability of other modes of travel in the midtown area to offer the greatest number of choices to those who live in the area. The Union Pacific railroad tracks are being studied for a Bart extension and the Valley Transit Authority maintains bus and light rail service to Milpitas. A major bus interchange point currently located across the street from the new library site will soon be relocated near the new light rail station at Great Mall Parkway. Each new project that generates more than 100 peak hour trips is required to complete a site-specific traffic study, which may be required during the approval process for the library. Bicycles will be a factor in the design of the Library's plaza.

Reviews and Ordinances

The Library design review will be by the City Council, which maintains jurisdiction over plans in the Midtown Project Area. The building should conform to local planning and development codes. The preferred scheme, which is discussed in the next section, could cover as much as 71% percent of its site. (Building footprint - 40,724 GSF; Garage footprint - 58,090 GSF; Site - 138,954 GSF). The City, based on the 2001 California Building Code, will issue the building permit.

California Environmental Quality Act

The proximity of the rail line will require noise and vibration isolation to prevent negative impacts from rail movements. Permits may also be required for any work within the area of influence of the rail lines. Potential site contamination will need to be evaluated and remediated as necessary. An Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration of Environmental Impact is being prepared by others (RBF Consulting) to address other environmental concerns. Any required mitigations and cautions will need to be considered and addressed in the design phase.

